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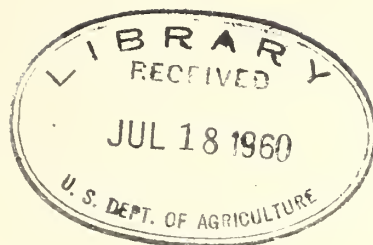
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The Future of Soviet Agrarian Collectivization

By 2

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It is particularly interesting to speculate about the future of the Russian agrarian system and its effect on the economic development of the country, because of the widespread and well-grounded conviction that the present kolkhoz (collective farm) structure is not deeply rooted and lacks stability. For, in the first place, forced collectivization has not solved the agrarian or peasant question in Russia in harmony with the historic aspirations of the people who till the soil. I mean, it has not solved it in the sense in which the Great French Revolution and subsequent agrarian reforms, aided by the industrial revolution, largely solved this question in Western Europe and produced a fairly stable agrarian society. Quite the contrary in Russia. And, in the second place, the present kolkhoz system is still in a transitional stage, even from the standpoint of Communist ideology and policy.

Formally, this fact is reflected in a familiar legal distinction made in Soviet theory between state property and kolkhoz-cooperative property. The latter, according to Soviet teaching, is destined to disappear eventually by being merged with the state property when passage from the present so-called socialist stage to full-fledged Communism is accomplished. Thus, from the Soviet and, especially the non-Soviet viewpoint, the Russian agrarian system continues to be organization-wise in a state of flux.

A comparison with the manufacturing industry may, perhaps, bring home better the essential instability of the agrarian system in the USSR.

Many important changes can be envisaged, for instance, in the organization of the famous Putilov (now Kirov) factory in Leningrad -- especially under a different politico-economic regime. But, basically, the factory is almost certain to continue to exist as an entity, say, in 1970 as it had in 1952 or 1910. It is not likely that, whatever the foreseeable changes in the political or economic conditions, this or any other factory like it should be divided up into small and entirely separate units. How different the position of the collective or state farms. For it is not difficult to imagine a situation in which such farms could be divided into small holdings to be cultivated by peasant farmers, just as the large estates that co-existed with the Putilov works before the Revolution, were parcelled out in 1917-18.

Peering into the future, we may encounter three possible alternative developments: First, continuation of the present trend towards intensified collectivism; second, a significant and not just a minor and short-lived relaxation or liberalization of forced agrarian collectivism; and third, a sweeping peasant revolution. These alternative hypotheses provide, I think, a useful framework for discussion and attempts at prognostication of the future Russian agrarian order.

I

The trend towards intensified agrarian collectivism, which is evident in the USSR in the 1950's, began in the late 1930's on the eve of the Second World War. Prior to this period, in the mid-30's, and particularly since the promulgation of the Model Charter of the collectives,

In February 1935, encouragement was given by the Government to a rather modest development of personal farming by the collective farmers on their little plots or kitchen gardens. Such personal farming was linked with a limited free market for foodstuffs. This "acre and a cow" farming, as I have called it elsewhere,^{1/} represented something of a concession to the peasants who were forced into the kolkhozy in the early thirties. It helped to improve, to some extent, the low peasant morale and the tight food supply situation, and had a salutary effect on animal husbandry, to which collectivization dealt a severe blow.

However, the Kremlin theoretically assigned to personal farming a purely subordinate role in Soviet agricultural economy, a subservient and supplementary function to the collectivized farm sector. But the very success of personal farming and the well-known attachment of the peasant to it, conjures for the Kremlin the threat of a serious competitor to the collectivized farm economy.

We need not inquire here whether such apprehensions on the part of the Kremlin of a serious encroachment of individualism, with consequent undermining of the collective farm system, were well founded. It suffices that they existed in the minds of the Politburo. After all, the old Marxist suspicion of the peasant reflected in Lenin's often quoted dictum, that "small-scale production gives birth to capitalism and bourgeoisie constantly, daily, hourly, with elemental force and in vast proportion," is applicable, with some qualifications, also to a peasant in a kolkhoz cultivating his

^{1/} "Agrarian Collectivism in the Soviet Union. I." Journal of Political Economy, v. XLV, no. 5, October 1937. p. 630.

kitchen garden of an acre or two. It was not likely that the Kremlin would tolerate concessions to peasants which it deemed a threat to agrarian collectivism any longer than it considered absolutely necessary. The fate of the NEP, which was abandoned unceremoniously in the late 1920's in favor of collectivization, is a classical example of the Kremlin's behavior in such matters.

The gathering war clouds, in the late 1930's, presaging an early storm, also may have contributed to the tightening of the kolkhoz system as a measure of war preparedness. The time for action came in the early spring of 1939, when the 18th, and so far the last, Communist Party Congress took place.

At that Congress, ^{the then} Premier Molotov and A. A. Andreev, the latter a member of the powerful Politburo and the rapporteur on the agricultural situation, both complained of collective farmers who do not really work on the collective farms or work a little "for show" only and use the collectives as a screen to avoid taxation. They scored the excessive development of personal farming by the collective farmers on their little kitchen garden plots which "in some places began to outgrow the collectivized economy and became the basic part, while collective farming became secondary." Faulty distribution of income as the central cause of such phenomena, much emphasized a year earlier, was apparently forgotten. No concrete measures to "remedy" the situation were proposed at the time. But when Andreev, concluding his speech, said that it was necessary "to liquidate the useless practice (not needed by anyone) of non-intervention into the internal life of the collectives and replace

it by constant care and help to the collective farmers" and that "it needs to be realized that collectives need serious guidance and with this guidance from us" -- his words had a rather ominous ring to those who could read between the lines of Soviet pronouncements.

It was not necessary to wait long for these suspicions to materialize. On May 27, 1939, an important decree was issued by the Kremlin which initiated the movement for curbing personal farming. Although the size of the kitchen gardens was not reduced formally, various measures were taken for strict limitation of the use of land for such purposes. Any excess of land, however small, over the narrow legal limits set for kitchen gardens was ruthlessly confiscated, even if such land subsequently could not be productively used and remained idle. A minimum amount of labor to be devoted to the work in the kolkhoz by each able-bodied member, irrespective of sex, was prescribed. The penalty for non-fulfillment of this minimum was expulsion from the kolkhoz and loss of the kitchen garden plots.

These measures were followed by others, aiming to deflate personal farming and to strengthen the collective economy of the kolkhoz, not only the field crop sector but also the much weaker animal husbandry. Throughout all this there runs like a red thread the twin objective of the Soviet state: (a) to increase its share of farm output and (b) to impose a tighter control over the farm labor supply, in order to increase labor productivity in agriculture and to channel a part of it into other occupations when the Soviet policy requires such a course of action.

The significance of the latter is attested by Stalin's "humble" appeal at the XVIII Communist Party Congress in March, 1939, to give industry, now that Soviet agriculture has the blessings of mechanization, one million, five hundred thousand new workers annually.

It should be noted, however, that with the penchant for re-insurance, characteristic of Soviet bureaucracy, there were also stressed the disadvantages of depersonalization of labor in the kolkhozy and the effectiveness of a small working unit, the so-called *zveno*, especially for intensive crops. At the XVIII Communist Party Congress, Andreev also stated, "The more the labor in kolkhozy is individualized through the *zveno* or individual kolkhoz workers, the more their labor is materially rewarded, the more productive it is with respect to crops and livestock . . . Depersonalization of labor in the large brigades is the principal obstacle to the further increase of labor productivity in kolkhozy."

The exigencies of the war, with its heavy inroads on the collective farm draft power and manpower and the acute food shortage, had led to a relaxation of this policy of intensive collectivism. It was not formally abandoned, but the Government looked the other way while personal farming of collective farmers moderately expanded and the peasants living near large cities found profitable opportunities for bartering or selling their produce for cash to the city folks with their meager food rations. The *zveno* method of work became widespread in the kolkhozy, which were deprived to a considerable extent of tractors and even horses, and had to rely increasingly on hand labor.

There were apparently many hopefuls, both inside and outside of

Russia, who believed that the end of the second world war would bring a substantial liberalization of Soviet agrarian policy. They had important historic precedent on their side. Every war that Russia fought since the Crimean campaign of 1853-55, was followed by more or less serious agrarian reforms or by a revolution. The great act of abolition of serfdom, in 1861, was one of the most important consequences of the disastrous Crimean campaign. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 was followed by some minor reforms. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, in which Russia was defeated, led to a serious peasant revolt and the famous Stolypin reforms. The effect of the principal of these reforms, aiming at the dissolution of the mir ^{2/} or communal land tenure is highly debatable, but the beneficial effect of some of the others is not open to doubt. The first world war led, of course, to the agrarian revolution of 1917-18, which definitely liquidated landlordism in Russia. The Civil War of 1918-20 was followed by the NEP.

Thus, the lesson of history pointed to another significant change towards liberalization of agrarian relations also after the second world war. As is well-known, this has not happened, but just the reverse. And for that, there is also historic precedent -- the First Fatherland War, the struggle with Napoleon in the early 19th Century. I am fond of quoting the words addressed to the peasants in Tsar Alexander I's mani-

^{2/} For a discussion of the mir see: Lazar Volin, "The Peasant Household Under the Mir and the Kolkhoz in Modern Russian History," in The Cultural Approach to History, edited by Caroline F. Ware. (New York, 1940). pp. 125-139.

feste of 1814, in which the Tsar "most graciously" thanked all classes of the population and granted them various "privileges." Here are two words: "The peasants, our ~~loved~~ people, will be recompensed by God." ^{3/}

Stalin never said anything like this, but the post-war agrarian policy of the Soviet Government violated Tsar Alexander's "promise" to the Russian peasants who, at that time, expected emancipation from serfdom after heavy sacrifices in the war for the liberation of the Fatherland, but whose lot was not alleviated by one iota. The decree of September 19, 1946, "Concerning Measures for the Liquidation of the Violations of the Kolkhoz Charter," and the famous February 1947 agricultural decree clearly indicated that no change in the agrarian structure was contemplated. On the contrary, they heralded a return of Soviet collective agriculture to the status quo ante bellum and the end of informal concessions to the peasants.

But the Kremlin did not stop here. The next step was the famous campaign in 1950-51 for the drastic restriction of the small zveno method of collective farm work in favor of the larger brigade and the merger of kolkhozy into larger units. The merger movement spread literally over the whole vast territory of the Soviet Union, disregarding the wide regional differences in natural and economic conditions. As a result, the number of collective farms decreased, according to official Soviet reports, by more than half. ^{4/}

3/ Eugene Tarle, Napoleon's Invasion of Russia, 1812, p. 269. New York, 1942.

4/ I discussed the merger campaign in greater detail in an article entitled "The Turn of the Screw in Soviet Agriculture," in Foreign Affairs, January 1952. pp. 277-288.

1870

1871

1872

1873

1874

1875

1876

Among the more or less immediate consequences of the merger campaign are likely to be tighter state-control over the kolkhozy and their output and increased power of the management over farm labor, which is less abundant than it was before the war. Moreover, labor shortage has been accentuated since the war by lower farm draft power and machinery supplies, though this situation may be expected to be remedied in the future. Under such conditions, the favorite Bolshevik method is to drive kolkhoz labor harder; and this practice is not likely to be discontinued unless a crisis develops. Naturally, bullying tactics require the strengthening of the hand of kolkhoz management, which was accomplished by the mergers.

However, the task of actual or technical farm consolidation, as distinguished from administrative mergers, is bound to take a good many years. In the course of these operations, it is not unlikely that the Kremlin may discover the much advertised advantages of the merged super-collective farms to be far short of the original expectations. This may, in time, hold true, among other things, of the anticipated serious deflation of the kolkhoz bureaucratic apparatus, which has been bedeviling Soviet collective agriculture. The Kremlin may also rediscover that the large size of the farm unit is not synonymous with the optimum size and maximum efficiency; and that the super-collectives are too unwieldy to manage, especially in years of difficult climatic conditions when utmost flexibility and maneuverability is essential. In other words, a repetition of the unfortunate Soviet experience with huge state farms in the early 1930's is conceivable. As a sequel, the Kremlin may, in

another one of its famous "strategic retreats" or somersaults, condemn super-collective farming as a manifestation of gigantomania and order the unscrambling of the giant merged farm and a return to smaller collective farm units of the pre-1950 type. This, I repeat, is conceivable, but it would seem also that another factor of a catalytic nature, would have to be present--namely, serious peasant resistance or, at least, a major threat of it. However, once substantial peasant resistance was in the offing, it probably could not be stemmed merely by minor concessions. Such a situation would more properly fall under our second and third alternatives, to be discussed presently.

Let us now retrace our steps a little and assume that there will be no retreat from super-collectivism; that the Bolshevik cult of the large in the economic sphere is one of the untouchables of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, and perish the very thought of the limitations arising from the Law of Diminishing Returns as a wicked aberration of Bourgeois economists. Can we then expect any further evolution beyond the so-called "organizational-economic strengthening" of the merged super-collectives and, if so, in what direction?

Well, a likely goal is the resettlement of the collectivized peasantry into new kolkhoz towns or enlarged villages, the so-called agro-gorod. Much was heard about the agro-gorod during the merger campaign in 1950, only to die down and to be abandoned as an immediate issue in the spring of 1951. The Kremlin was apparently deterred from pursuing this line of attack by the serious competition that such a program of resettlement was bound to offer to collective farm production, which has been slow to recover since the war.

Shortages of construction materials and skilled labor may have been another factor. Finally, peasant dissatisfaction and its effect on production may also have been feared.

The proposed resettlement of collectivized peasantry in larger centers was justified by Soviet spokesmen on the ground that cultural and other communal needs could be met more economically in larger settlements, and the proverbial contrast between town and country, stressed by Marxism-Leninism, be diminished. But apart from any utilitarian or welfare considerations, the project is dear to the Bolshevik heart for political and ideological reasons, since the peasant would become, in the process, more akin to the city worker. And it certainly would not be considered a loss from the Bolshevik standpoint if the historic bonds that united neighbors in small villages were torn asunder and the historic association with the land that dates back to the period of serfdom^{5/} were dissolved. The severe curtailment, if not a complete elimination of personal farming which would accompany resettlement, would also be considered a major gain by the Soviet Government. Thus, the outlook is good for a new try in this direction ten to twenty years hence, when conditions may be deemed more favorable.

Still another possible development is the integration of the co-existing kolkhoz and state farm systems into a single "socialist"

^{5/} See Isaac Volin, "The Russian Peasant and Serfdom," Agricultural History, v. 17, January 1943, pp. 41-61. Republished in Herman Ausubel, Ed., The Making of Modern Europe, Bk. 2, pp. 709-731, New York, 1951.

type, patterned essentially on the state farms. It would seem that the trend toward growing operational control of the kolkhozy by the Government, the increase in size as a result of the mergers, and the consequent decrease in the number of farms served by a typical M.T.S. all seem to point to their eventual "assimilation" in such a unified system. It is questionable, however, whether the Kremlin would be willing to substitute the regular wage method of payment for farm labor, characteristic of the state farms, for the "workday" method under which members of the kolkhozy are merely residual claimants to the kolkhoz income,^{6/} while obligations to the State and capital investment in collective farms have the first priority.^{7/}

The great benefit to the Kremlin of the kolkhoz "workday" method of remuneration would probably be further enhanced if, as was recently suggested, distribution of income in kind were curtailed in favor of cash payments as a substitute.^{8/} And so long as the "workday" method of payment is retained, it is probable that the fiction of self-government and of separate existence of the collective farms, legally independent of the state farms, will also be maintained. The more so that the merged

6/ I discussed the distribution of income in the kolkhoz in "A Survey of Soviet Russian Agriculture," p. 36. (U.S. Department of Agriculture Monograph 5, 1951.)

7/ Compulsory capital investment in collective farms through the annual appropriation of a certain proportion of the cash income to so-called "indivisible funds" was recently increased in a large majority of agricultural regions. The present requirement is that no less than 15 and no more than 20 percent of the cash income of the collective farms be appropriated to the "indivisible fund." A further possible increase of such compulsory savings as an aspect of intensified collectivism cannot be ruled out.

8/ L. Glotov, "Socialized and Personal Elements in the Kolkhozy," Bol'shevik no. 24, 1951. p. 48.

super-collectives provide many of the advantages of operational control possessed by the Soviet Government in the case of state farms. Needless to say, I do not anticipate the arrival by 1970 of the Stalinist "Messianic" stage of Communism and transformation of the so-called artel type of the kolkhoz into a commune.

The impact on Russian economic life of a continuation of the present trends of agrarian collectivism is not likely, it seems to me, to differ greatly from what it has been heretofore. Collectivization, with its tight Government control, will no doubt enable the Soviet Government to continue the exaction of a heavy tribute from agriculture in the form of very cheap supplies of foodstuffs and fibers. The Government would also continue, under such conditions, to control the rural labor supply, channelling as much of it as it deems necessary into non-agricultural occupations, even, as was apparently the case during the early post-war years, at the expense of the needs of agriculture.^{2/} Thus, it may be assumed that collectivization will continue to facilitate the Kremlin's program of lopsided industrialization, of large capital investments, primarily in heavy and armament industries and strategic projects at the

^{2/} These are dependent, during any particular period, on the crop pattern, the efficiency of management, and the prevailing agricultural techniques which is, itself, a function of many factors, such as: the availability and up-to-dateness of farm equipment that, in turn, depends upon the volume of investments in agriculture; the know-how to use such equipment efficiently, the farm practices followed, etc. Moreover, many of the factors mentioned are, themselves, influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the state of the labor supply and the possibility of substitutions. Thus, shortage of labor may lead to a greater use of machinery, a more extensive crop pattern, etc. The problem of long-range prognostication obviously bristles with difficulties and I do not propose to solve it. For the present, let us be content to note it.

expense of consumption, especially in the countryside, and of investment in agriculture. This is a program of squeezing the peasant with which Soviet agricultural collectivization has always been closely linked. ^{10/}

For, as I have pointed out elsewhere, agricultural collectivism, Soviet style, is like a double-faced Janus, looking with one face towards the Communist Party state and with the other towards the peasant. ^{11/} This dichotomy is central to the whole Soviet agrarian problem.

Parenthetically, it is also highly important to bear in mind that the concept of economic welfare, focused essentially on the satisfaction of the desires of the mass consumer by the social output (which is at the root of all liberal economic philosophies, relying on competition combined with varying doses of state intervention ^{12/}), is alien to the totalitarian philosophy. The latter is pivoted in practice on some central doctrine of collective power in which the consumer, as such, plays a very inferior role. His needs must be satisfied, of course, insofar as they may be essential prerequisites to his contribution as a worker to collective production or insofar as he is a member of the ruling elite. The rest does not matter. "Human beings are both 'ends in themselves' and instruments of production," wrote an eminent British economist. ^{13/} In a

^{10/} I have discussed the relation of Soviet agricultural policy to industrialization in "Agrarian Individualism in the Soviet Union: Its Rise and Decline," II. Agricultural History, v. 12, April 1938, pp. 133-135.

^{11/} "Soviet Agricultural Collectivism in Peace and War," American Economic Review, vol. XLV, May 1951. pp. 465-474.

^{12/} This largely holds true also of the various currents of democratic socialism.

^{13/} A. C. Pigou, The Economic Welfare, 4th Ed. London, 1938. p. 12.

totalitarian society human beings, apart from the ruling elite, are mere "instruments of production."

Whether collectivization will result in significant gains in agricultural production during the next ten to twenty years is much more problematical. For this would presuppose considerably increased investments in agriculture (greater mechanical equipment, more fertilizers, etc.), as well as increased economic incentives for the peasants in terms of lower cost and more abundant supplies of consumer manufactured goods, as well as a much lessened exaction of foodstuffs from the Russian village. But such a development seems unrealistic, since it would run squarely counter to the closely related Kremlin policies of super-industrialization, aggressive Communist imperialism and heavy armaments for total warfare.^{14/} However, this does not mean that a marked expansion may not be achieved in the production of some particular crop, such as cotton, for instance, albeit at a high cost, if the Kremlin should decide to concentrate its energy and resources on the task.

^{14/} The Soviet view of the close relation of modern war to the national economy may be gathered from the following statement in the Red Army organ: "... Modern war (it is a question of large-scale war) is characterised by the widest scope of military operations, the participation in them of an immense amount of manpower and materiel. This requires of the belligerent state extremely big material resources, well organised and strenuous work on the part of the entire national economy to satisfy the needs of the front, the greatest endurance and staunchness on the part of the whole people throughout the war. Modern war thus draws into its orbit the entire country as a whole; it, in substance, obliterates the boundary between the front and the Rear. . . . (A. Kornienko, "Comrade Stalin on the Role of the Rear in Modern War," Red Star, April 24, 1952.

II

We are now ready for our second alternative -- that of liberalization of Soviet agrarian policy, or a reformist solution -- what the Russians call "descent with the brakes on."

First of all, to repeat, I do not mean by liberalization of Soviet agrarian policy merely minor and short-lived concessions to the peasants. These are always possible when the Kremlin is confronted by difficulties, such as a very poor harvest, for example. But I mean something that would stick, something similar in its effect to the NEP,^{15/} only a NEP that would really live up to Lenin's promise of being introduced "in all seriousness and for a long time to come." If we should wish to go further back to the pre-Soviet Russian history, then the peasant emancipation reform of the 1860's stands out, despite all its faults, as an example of the type of a reformist approach I have in mind. Specifically with respect to collective farming, liberalization would have to be reflected in increased economic incentives and much less regimentation.

This would certainly require as a first priority task a drastic diminution of Government exactions, which would involve a thorough overhauling of the farm taxation system, particularly of the deliveries in kind. Beyond this there may be mentioned such measures as: The deflation of central planning in agriculture and increasing the scope of initiative at the grass roots; a marked expansion of individual personal farming of collective farmers, especially in the livestock sector, permitting the

^{15/} The relatively liberal New Economic Policy, which supplanted the regime of War Communism in 1921.

peasants also to own horses, reform and simplification of the system of payment in collective farms, advancing the priority of the peasants' claim to the farm income to which he now has merely a residual claim, democratization of the management of collectives and improvement in their relations with machine-tractor stations; and, possibly transformation of the kolkhozy into cooperative associations for the joint cultivation of land with a real voice in the management of machine-tractor stations. Other changes in a similar vein may be envisaged.

Logically, increased economic incentives to the peasants should result in lessened regimentation. But such a sequence does not necessarily follow under a Stalinist regime. It is possible, therefore, to envisage an increase in economic incentives without seriously diminished regimentation, but as a long run proposition it seems dubious to me.

of agrarian policy

The whole concept of liberalization/is predicated on one and/or two possibilities: 1) Serious peasant discontent which the Government would wish to allay; and 2) changed convictions of the Soviet top policy makers with regard to the intrinsic usefulness of the kolkhoz.

It is more convenient to discuss the question of peasant unrest in conjunction with our third alternative. Here it suffices to state the conclusion, that peasant discontent which, under propitious conditions, may flare up into a revolt, is not likely to disappear during the next ten or twenty years. Whether the Kremlin would consider such a danger sufficiently serious to forestall by far-reaching reforms, is another matter. I would be inclined to answer such a question in the negative. It is true, that we have the precedent of the NEP, and that an important

element of the Communist Party, to so-called Right Opposition, led by Bukharin and Rykov, apparently favored its continuation. But the NEP lasted for only some seven or eight years, and its leading supporters within and outside the Communist ranks were exterminated. In the meantime, the Stalinist regime has become much more firmly entrenched than it was when Stalin declared, in 1929, with his characteristic gentleness, that the NEP can be "thrown to the devil" when "it ceases serving socialist purposes." ^{16/}

It may, however, be asked whether a serious threat of war would not make the Kremlin inclined towards appeasement of the peasantry in order to win wholehearted support of the population and the army? On the face of it, this is a reasonable assumption. Even from the standpoint of naked realpolitik, peasant discontent is a serious drawback in a tense international conjuncture. I would imagine that next to the abolition of concentration camps and the midnight police raids, no measure would be more popular than the relaxation of the kolkhoz system; provided, of course, that the underlying population, to use a Veblenian term, would really trust the good intentions of the Government. Such measures would be popular not only in the village, but, I should think, also in the cities. For large numbers of the swollen urban and industrial population left or were forced off the land relatively recently and, therefore, undoubtedly still retain much of the peasant outlook and

^{16/} In a speech at the Conference of Marxist Agrarian Scholars on December 27, 1929, entitled "Concerning the Questions of Agrarian Policy in the USSR," included in Stalin's Voprosy Leninizma, 9th edition, 1934, p. 459. ("Questions of Leninism," English translation.)

sympathies, even though they are toiling in workshops, mines and on the construction projects and not in the fields. The peasant, therefore, remains the central figure in the Soviet populace, if not in the Soviet economy, and the treatment accorded to him by the Kremlin reveals much of the nature and quality of its so-called socialist system.

But after all is said on this score that can be said, it still remains doubtful that the Kremlin would be swayed by considerations of the kind mentioned above. The events preceding the last war and the current situation when the Communist pressure against the peasantry has increased, despite the tense international atmosphere, underlines the fact that the Politburo is content to rely, in the face of a war danger, on the mailed fist of terror rather than on the velvet glove of concessions in dealing with the peasants. There is little ground then to expect from the Kremlin serious reforms aiming to assuage peasant discontent, even though it is not likely to disappear from the Russian countryside in the foreseeable future.

So far our discussion has underscored the Kremlin's unswerving devotion to the kolkhoz. We can turn now to the second possibility. What about the possible change of mind or heart of the Soviet rulers with respect to the usefulness of the kolkhoz system in its present form. Here, too, the prospects are not auspicious. There are, broadly speaking, two sets of rather closely related reasons for the attachment of the Communists to the kolkhoz: First, the practical or pragmatic reasons. These were adumbrated earlier and revolve around the need for large supplies of cheap agricultural products to feed and clothe the growing industrial population and the army, and to provide the necessary

raw materials for industry and for exports. Second, an ideological predilection for agrarian collectivism, rooted in the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist dogma, and immensely strengthened since the liquidation of individual peasant farming in the early 30's.

Let us address ourselves first to the practical aspect. While the kolkhoz system has not lived up to the original expectations of a greatly increased output, nevertheless the Soviet state was enabled, as was already mentioned, to exact large quantities of needed farm products at a low cost to itself. It is hard to conceive that the Soviet Government would easily abandon such an important prerogative. This holds especially true precisely because of the war danger. Even if the latter should become less acute in the future, it could hardly be eradicated from the minds of the Soviet policy makers, wedded to the doctrine of "capitalist encirclement."

Of course, it can be argued with excellent reason that the relaxation of the kolkhoz system would have a highly beneficial effect on production. And there can be no question as the crucial need for expanded agricultural output in view of the slow post-war recovery of Russian agriculture on the one hand, and the growth of population on the other, which, according to so high a Bolshevik functionary as Beria, has been exceeding 3 million annually.^{17/} It is, however, the consensus of informed opinion, that increased agricultural production in Russia can be

^{17/} Pravda, November 7, 1951. A continuation of this trend is by no means certain in view of the process of growing urbanization and its demonstrated deflationary effect on the high birth rate.

affected primarily through raising the yields per acre and, on a relatively small extent, through further expansion of acreage, because of the limitation of suitable land resources. In other words, it is the road of intensive farming rather than that of extensive development. Agricultural expansion must take. This essentially is also the basic position. And here, as in animal husbandry, experience teaches that relaxation of the kolkhoz system would be most helpful. This is shown in a left-handed sort of a way by those Soviet officials who, like those who advocated the even more individualistic methods of farm work in the kolkhoz.

But the crux of the matter is, that in order to induce farmers to produce for the state, at the rate required by the Soviets, it would be necessary for the Government to supply adequate incentives in terms of ample manufactured goods at reasonable prices. And this, as was pointed out earlier, is unlikely because of the Kremlin's adherence to the policy of super-industrialization and Communist imperialism.

Even if it could be demonstrated that the flow of needed agricultural products to the state would not be impaired by the relaxation of the kolkhoz system, the ideological factor would, in my opinion, block such a liberalization. Perhaps as good evidence as any to support this thesis is the example of Tito's stubborn clinging to agricultural collectivization after the break with Stalin, despite the economic disadvantages of the Yugoslav farm collective system and its undoubted political disadvantages. Tito's attachment to agrarian collectivism is motivated primarily by ideological predilections and, since he is a good product of the Marxist-Leninist school, his attitude is characteristic.

It is, I think, important to understand that the Communist ideology carries with it a considerable amount of irrationality or, as it is often said, it has a mystique of its own, which pervades and perverts even its rational elements. Thus, the basic Marxist doctrine of superiority of large-scale methods of production in agriculture as in industry, which was greatly strengthened in the minds of the Soviet leaders by the fascination of the tractor and the combine, is in itself a rational, if debatable, doctrine. However, it is subject to many qualifications of a theoretical and practical nature. But the Bolshevnik attachment to this doctrine is, to a large extent, irrational, hence the qualifications are disregarded, hence the emergence of gigantomania. Even more irrational is the suspicion and distrust of the small peasant producer, inherited from Marx and reflected in the famous dictum of Lenin, cited earlier, "small-scale production gives birth to capitalism and the bourgeoisie" constantly, daily, hourly, with an elemental force, and in vast proportions.

It is precisely because of its large strain of irrationality that Communist ideology represents such a powerful bulwark against relaxation of the collective farm system. This is not to deny the flexibility of Soviet policy in meeting a pragmatic situation. Temporary compromise, strategic retreats, minor concessions, even a certain gradualism in the attainment of goals are permissible. After all, Lenin, himself, was a master of compromise and strategic retreat. But goals cannot be compromised. Once they are attained, as with collectivization, only a desperate situation would justify a retreat. It is almost impossible, therefore, to visualize a substantial relaxation of the kolkhoz system so long as the Soviet regime remains in the saddle.

III

Our third alternative hypothesis -- a peasant revolution -- is predicated on a tenacious opposition of peasants to kolkhozy, on a continued unrest in Russia's countryside.

The conditions which make for a peasant discontent have been present ever since forced collectivization. I do not need to demonstrate to this group that forced collectivization runs counter to the aspirations of the Russian peasants for land, that were reflected in their age-old struggle with the landlord and its protector, the tsarist autocracy. This struggle culminated in the agrarian revolution of 1917-18, that liquidated landlordism and transferred de facto, with minor exceptions, all of the land not already owned by the peasants into their hands. The kolkhoz system, however, destroyed independent peasant farming, except on its fringes, and has not provided the abundant life promised to the masses. It even brought wholesale starvation in the initial phase. I emphasize "masses" because I realize that there have been significant exceptions.^{18/} While failing to raise the standard of living, the kolkhoz system resulted in ever increasing regimentation that cannot be palatable to the formerly independent peasant farmers.

^{18/} I also was shown some prosperous kolkhozy during my visit to the Soviet Union in the mid-1930's. And it is well-known that the income (legal and illegal) of the kolkhoz bureaucracy and the earnings of some of the skilled workers (tractor drivers, combine operators, etc.) considerably exceed those of the rank and file.

My own opinion, which, unfortunately, I cannot substantiate statistically, but which is shared, I think, by many if not most observers and students of Russian agriculture, is that the apparent reconciliation of the peasantry with the kolkhoz system has been, so far at any rate, an enforced one. Remove the force and it will disappear. The experience of the last war lends support to this view.

The Germans, as is well-known, during the early stages of the invasion, decided for economic reasons -- if you can call plunder economic -- to follow the Bolshevik example and to retain the kolkhoz system as a means of extracting the largest possible supply of farm products. Thus, Hitler apparently disregarded an important weapon of psychological warfare, just as Napoleon disregarded it in 1812, when he failed to bring the fruits of the French Revolution to the East by abolishing serfdom in Russia.

But there were some exceptions where the German military authorities permitted the dissolution of the kolkhozy. The peasants, judging from reports, had joyously availed themselves of such opportunities and "divided up" the kolkhoz land among themselves as they had done a quarter of a century earlier with the estate land. ^{19/}

Evidence which I think is also symptomatic, despite all possible qualifications, is the generally hostile attitude towards kolkhozy

^{19/} See, for instance, an article entitled "How a Kolkhoz Was Divided," by R. Menskii, in Narodnaya Pravda, Nos. 7-8, pp. 35-38, May 1950.

of the war and post-war defectors from the USSR, although the attitude towards nationalization of large-scale industry is by no means universally unfavorable. The hostility towards collective farming seems to be, in fact, the universal point of agreement among these people outside of general hatred of Stalinism. Now our sample is legitimately open to suspicion as containing a more than normal proportion of persons strongly opposed to the Soviet regime. Nevertheless, the difference in the attitude towards the nationalized industry and collective farming makes it impossible to rule this evidence out of court.

Such has been the situation until the present. What of the future? We must recognize, of course, that the actual eye witness memory of the horrors of collectivization and famine, which has doubtless conditioned the attitude of the peasantry towards the kolkhoz, will gradually fade away during the next ten to twenty years as a new generation comes on the scene. However, the lesson of history indicates that such gruesome events and resentments which they produce are not easily erased from the historic folk consciousness. Certainly, the memory of the hated serfdom and the injustices committed during its abolition, when the former serfs were deprived of some of the land they cultivated in favor of the masters, rankled in the peasant mind half a century after the event.

Lenin, incidentally, attributed so much importance to this particular grievance that, at the turn of the century, he insisted on incorporating in the platform of the then united Russian Socialist Democratic Party (that was not yet divided into the Bolshevik and Menshevik



wings) a provision favoring the return to the peasants of this so-called cut-off land of which they were deprived during the emancipation in the 1860's. And we can rely in such matters on Lenin, who had as good a scent for popular discontent and a talent for capitalizing on it for party ends as any politician.

But it will be retorted that such a historic analogy could not be applied to the kolkhozy in 1960-1970, thirty to forty years after collectivization, for two main reasons. In the first place, the grievances of Russian peasants against landlords at the turn of the century were accentuated by a serious agricultural crisis, which depressed the standard of living of the rural population. Whatever difficulties may be expected, no such a crisis is now on the horizon unless another war should break out.

In the second place, the Russian peasant, both before and after his emancipation, was essentially an individual farmer operating his small holding, even though communal land tenure, the so-called mir system, prevailed over a large part of Russia. Land hunger was therefore natural to the Russian individual peasant farmer, accustomed as he was to a fairly extensive system of agriculture. As against that, it may be argued that the kolkhoz peasant, unlike his predecessor, is likely to gradually lose the psychological make-up characteristic of an individual farmer. It will be claimed that this is especially apt to be true of the younger generation born and reared in the atmosphere of a collective farm.

I am, however, sceptical of such a thorough-going psychological transformation of the second or even the third generation of collective farmers. No doubt, they will differ psychologically from their parents and grandparents, who were forced to surrender the relative freedom of the NEP. Still, even by 1970, let alone 1960, not all of those who remember the NEP and the subsequent horrors of collectivization will vanish from the earth, despite the great ravages of the famine of the early 30's and the war. The presence of such old-timers, with their individualistic habits, memories and resentments, is likely to have a diluting or, from the Soviet standpoint, a polluting effect on the collectivist psychology of the new generation of collective farmers. This, I think, should not be underestimated. Furthermore, insofar as personal farming is not entirely abolished, it will also serve as a reminder of a different socio-economic order, the attractiveness of which may be heightened as it becomes farther removed in time and as the discipline in super-collectives is tightened. For, in the final analysis, no human being likes to be pushed around and the peoples of Russia, judging from the history of that country, are no exception to this rule. ^{19a/} Such a reaction is likely to grow with every turning of the collectivist screw, which increases regimentation. And the prevailing trend so far, as I have pointed out above, has been towards intensified collectivism.

Of course, a marked improvement in the standard of living might go far to offset the above argument. But, as I pointed out earlier, the

^{19a/} I discussed this point in "Russian Was Always Like That?" South Atlantic Quarterly, Vol. L, January 1951. pp. 1-11.

prospects of such an improvement are rather dim. Yet, without a more abundant life for the masses and not merely for a small top layer of kolkhoz bureaucracy and some skilled workers, it is doubtful whether the new generation of Russian peasants, conditioned to the kolkhoz from its birth, will find the poverty plus regimentation genuinely acceptable despite all the indoctrination of Soviet propaganda.

The discussion so far has centered on factors and conditions that make a peasant revolution in Soviet Russia a possibility within the next ten to twenty years. We saw that inflammable material is plentiful to start a conflagration, but this is not to say that it is inevitable. The tremendous odds against organized resistance in a totalitarian state are well-known and need not be dwelt upon here. As a matter of fact, an essential prerequisite for a peasant revolution seems to be a serious political weakening of the Soviet regime. Such is also the lesson of the two great peasant revolts which occurred early this century -- that of 1905, following the enfeeblement of the Russian autocracy as a result of the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War and, again in 1917, after the overthrow of the Romanov monarchy. I would not under-rate, however, the possibility of a spontaneous peasant revolt once the power of the police state becomes less formidable.

What would be the outcome organization-wise of an agrarian revolution if and when it comes? It is not sterile to speculate about this even if we cannot hope to arrive at a very precise conclusion.

It is, I think, quite obvious that the kolkhozy in their present

increased consumption of feedstuffs on the farm. Thus, combined production, i.e. production for the market, is likely to be particularly adversely affected. This would apply especially to industrial and other cash crops, such as, cotton, flax, and to some extent wheat as compared with rye, since the former is more of a cash crop. The situation is apt to be aggravated by the inability of industry adequately to supply the countryside with manufactured goods during a period of crisis.

The above analysis is applicable should the kolkhoz land and capital be divided among millions of peasant small-holders as the octobers were in 1917. There are, however, two obstacles to this solution of the kolkhoz problem which will become increasingly more significant as the years go by.

The first obstacle lies in the fact that, as time goes on, the kolkhoz peasants are presumably becoming less accustomed to individual farming. No doubt, considerable difference in this respect may be expected between the kolkhoz peasant of the 1940's and even 1950's on the one hand and that of the 1960's and 1970's on the other. An even more serious obstacle to a simple division of kolkhozy is presented by the problem of draft power and farm machinery, which are concentrated at present in machine-tractor stations.

How could a machine-tractor station be divided up on an individualistic basis without causing a serious shortage of draft power and inequity? This would have been a formidable problem even in 1938, when mechanical power (tractors, trucks, etc.) accounted for about 70 percent of all power used on the farm. It is even more serious today, when the number of horses has greatly decreased. And there is no reason to doubt that the

relative importance of mechanical power in Russian agriculture will increase in the future. Assuming the most optimistic increase in the number of tractors -- say, to a million compared with somewhat over half a million before the war, still it would not be sufficient to provide each of the many millions of peasant farmers with a tractor of his own.

Parenthetically, the number of farmers would probably be swelled by many city workers, perhaps unemployed and starving, who might return to the village to claim their share of the land. Of course, the very idea of a powerful Soviet tractor -- and the tendency has been for an increase in the size of the tractor in the USSR -- used on a holding of a few acres is preposterous. It is difficult also to believe that today, let alone ten or twenty years hence, the Russian peasantry would be willing to give up the tractor, even if it were possible. The younger generation of the Russian peasants has become accustomed to the tractor and this habituation is bound to increase as time goes on.

In any event, a return to the horse as the major source of draft power is utterly unrealistic unless Russian agriculture were headed for a real catastrophe. There just would not be enough horses to replace the tractors. Remember, that in the late twenties, before collectivization, there were close to 34-35 million horses in a smaller territory of pre-war USSR and, in 1938, there was only half that number, 17.5 million.^{21/} At the beginning of 1952, there were less than 15 million in the larger post-war territory. Moreover, the increase in the number of tractors is a matter of technology and can be pushed rapidly. When it comes to

^{21/} See Lazar Volin, "A Survey of Soviet Russian Agriculture," op. cit., p. 153.

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the growth of the horse population, however, we are dealing with a much slower biological force.

Thus, the Russian farmer could not dispense with the tractor if he would, and doubtless would not if he could. But, if tractor power and complicated farm machinery are to be used at all efficiently, let alone maximized, after the supposed agrarian revolution, some form of cooperative use seems inevitable. Cooperative use of tractors and farm machinery would be facilitated, I should think, by such cooperative habits as were acquired in the kolkhos and the machine-tractor station, especially by the generation of peasants which has grown up on the collective farm. The higher cultural level of the present Russian peasantry should also prove helpful. And it is well to recall that the Russian peasant was becoming accustomed to cooperation even before collectivization. There was the ancient mir system of communal land tenure, with its redistribution of land among the member families and the common crop rotation pattern. There were also the more modern marketing, processing and credit cooperatives, which came to the fore at the turn of the century. Perhaps the most notable example of the cooperative movement was that of the dairy industry in Siberia and Northeastern European Russia, which played so large a part in the development of the exports of Russian butter.

Lenin believed that if the peasants were given tractors they would embrace Communism. It did not work that way, although the destruction of the horses during collectivization, which greatly enhanced the role of the tractor, also facilitated Soviet control over Russian peasant

agriculture in the state machine-tractor stations. But, if a social revolution should occur, the tractor may yet greatly contribute to the development of a genuine voluntary cooperation, democratic style, in Russian agriculture. By the same token, tractor plus cooperation may go a long way to mitigate the putative adverse effects of an agricultural revolution, if and when it comes, on agricultural production and the national food supply.

